

Subject: Proposed Critical Habitat for Southern (puget sound) Resident Killer Whales

From: "maria" <dewato@att.net>

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To: <orcahabitat.nwr@noaa.gov>

CC: "Upthegrove, Rep. Dave" <Upthegro_Da@leg.wa.gov>, <senator_murray@murray.senate.gov>, <Maria_Cantwell@cantwell.senate.gov>, <adam.smith@mail.house.gov>, <exec.sims@metrokc.gov>

Attn: Chief - Protected Resources Division
Northwest Regional Office

Thank you for considering our comments.

NOAA Fisheries' [critical habitat plans](#) for Puget Sound Killer Whales are a long step in the right direction, but need improving in some key areas.

Presently, waters less than 20 feet in depth are excluded. It is difficult to understand how such waters can be excluded, when they provide critical habitat for the whales' food species. How can any section of Puget Sound be excluded? Good science and logic demonstrate that all waters are interconnected.

My husband and I own considerable waterfront property on the Hood Canal and have enjoyed seeing killer whales come as far south as Dewato Bay. As you know, Hood Canal waters are currently stressed by overdevelopment and poor management of sewer/septic runoff, resulting in low oxygen levels, which impact the whales' food species. Your plans have excluded the Hood Canal. Why? Killer whales have hunted in these waters for hundreds of years.

Additionally, Hood Canal waters interconnect directly with the Bremerton Naval Shipyard, whose waters have also been excluded. Why? Taxpayers subsidize Navy land and activity. It is not too much to ask that they be required to protect the waters that they use and which we enjoy, along with the whales, for recreation and food.

In closing, the Board of Directors of The Whale Museum <http://www.whalemuseum.org> has reviewed these plans and has concluded that there are two important additions that should be included. One of these is to include underwater noise as a Principal Constituent Element and to extend some "Critical Habitat" into the ocean where these orcas spend about half their time. We support those changes.

Thank You.

Mike and Maria Little

2650 SW 151st Pl

Seattle, WA 98166

206-241-1618